

WESTWOOD PARK



Via Electronic Mail

September 22, 2019

Jeanie Poling
San Francisco Planning Department
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94103

RE: Written Comments of Westwood Park Association regarding Balboa Reservoir Project Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (DSEIR).

Dear Ms. Poling:

The Westwood Park Association ("WPA") represents the interests of the residents of the Westwood Park Community that was developed more than 100 years ago and directly adjoins the proposed Balboa Reservoir Project ("Project").

This letter constitutes the written comments of the WPA on the DSEIR prepared for the Project, which was published and made available for public review on August 7, 2019.

1. Cumulative Impacts and City College Parking

As will be discussed below, WPA believes the analysis of the cumulative transportation impacts is flawed in that the analysis does not properly consider the impacts of the City College's ("CCSF") pending Ocean Campus projects, as shown in the recently adopted CCSF "Facilities Master Plan."

Cumulative Secondary Parking Impacts

The most significant impact of the Project as it relates to CCSF's concurrent expansion plans is the loss of the Project site's parking for CCSF staff, students and visitors. Although parking impacts are not considered

environmental impacts under CEQA, the DSEIR still must include an analysis of secondary parking impacts caused by the loss of existing parking, including impacts on public transit and other private ride share arrangements.

As noted in the DSEIR, secondary impacts related to CCSF are analyzed only in the initial study as part of the discussion of impacts on Public Services (DSEIR Appendix B, p. B-91.) This analysis assumes that CCSF will be constructing a 1200 space parking garage on the East Basin, as shown in the CCSF Facilities master plan, adopted in March 2019. However, at the May 2019 CCSF Board of Trustee's meeting the CCSF staff presented an update on a potential bond measure to fund construction of the CCSF master plan projects which eliminated funding for the East Basin Parking Garage. (DSEIR, p. 3.A-14.) In addition, the Transportation background information in the DSEIR Appendix C are dated April 29, 2019 and June 25, 2019. Please explain where the secondary impact of the elimination of virtually all the existing available parking on the East and West Basins on public transit and local traffic is analyzed and why the impact on SFMTA ridership and capacity analysis are presented in the appendices as "for information" only. For these reasons, the secondary impacts related to CCSF on transit and transit delay are not based on the most recent information related to the foreseeable CCSF Master Plan projects available to the Planning Department prior to publication of the DSEIR.

Moreover, the DSEIR does not analyze the secondary impacts of the elimination of parking as part of the cumulative impacts on transportation. As noted in a non-CEQA parking study prepared by Kittelson & Associates dated August 1, 2019 for the Project, it anticipates that parking shortages caused by the project and the CCSF development will lead to both an increased reliance on public transportation and an increase in drivers looking for parking spaces in adjacent residential neighborhoods such as Westwood Park. A copy of the Kittelson non-CEQA study is attached hereto as Exhibit 1.

Many of the streets within Westwood Park provide on-street parking that results in narrowing the effective roadway width and making two-way vehicle traffic difficult. (DSEIR, p. 6-34) This potentially hazardous condition would be exacerbated by additional vehicles looking for parking due to the shortage created by cumulative development. This is a potentially significant secondary transportation impact that is not adequately addressed in the DSEIR.

The number of vehicles that currently use the East Basin and West Basin parking lots are not accurately described in the DSEIR. In fact, on the very cover of the DSEIR is a picture of only the lower West Basin with only a few cars present. Attached as Exhibit 2 is an accurate picture of both the East Basin and West Basin taken at a peak period when student classes are in session. As you can see, the parking lots are full, with numerous cars parked in the CCSF parking spaces as well as in the parking lot which is the Project site.

The developer has stated on its website that there will be a public garage on the site “sized to meet City College demand”. The number and location of the replacement parking spaces should be discussed as should the elimination of the off-street parking spaces from the CCSF Master Plan development.

CCSF Enrollment Increase

CCSF has stated that the need for upgraded facilities is based on an approximately 55% increase in anticipated enrollment by 2026 but the cumulative transportation impact discussion is projected to year 2040. The additional enrollment between 2026 and 2040 for CCSF is not discussed. It can be assumed that the annual increase hence forth would be substantially greater than the annual percentage increase used by the Department based on a citywide average. The extraordinary growth in the student enrollment at CCSF as a consequence of free tuition mandates a cumulative analysis that accurately reflects the impacts of the cumulative growth of CCSF on transportation. We believe the DSEIR impact analysis is understated.

CCSF Student Housing Project

The DSEIR fails to mention in the cumulative analysis that CCSF will proceed with the construction of 500 units of student housing on the campus which was discussed at a Balboa Reservoir CAC meeting on June 10, 2019. Such a project would only exacerbate the lack of adequate parking, as well as creating additional secondary impacts on transportation, air quality and noise. The related impacts from this foreseeable Project should be included in the cumulative impact analysis.

2. Alternatives Analysis

CEQA requires that an EIR “consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decision-making and public

participation” (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(a)). The Project DSEIR considers three alternatives, plus the required “No Project” alternative. This may be a “reasonable range” of alternatives, but as discussed below, the WPA believes the specific alternatives selected, and the discussion of those alternatives, fails to meet the CEQA alternative analysis requirement that the alternative analysis will “foster informed decision-making and public participation.”

Alternative B: Financial Feasibility of Reduced Density Alternative

The WPA objects to the conclusion regarding the financial feasibility of Alternative B, the Reduced Density Alternative, that would reduce the number of housing units from either 1550 or 1100 units to 800 units. The DSEIR incorrectly states that “the financial feasibility of the reduced density alternative is unknown” (DSEIR, page 6-17). As noted on pages 2-5 in the Project Description/Background section of the DSEIR, the SFPUC issued a request for qualifications for development of the property in November 2016. From the submissions, SFPUC selected three developers to submit comprehensive proposals: Avalon, Emerald Fund and Related California. The proposal from Avalon and its development partners was selected by SFPUC to enter into exclusive negotiations for the development.

The Related California RFP proposal was to develop 680 units, of which 50.2% were proposed to be affordable and work force housing units, or 120 fewer units than the Alternative B project with 800 units. Therefore, there is no factual basis for the conclusion in the DSEIR that the financial feasibility of the Alternative B project is unknown as this is contrary to Related California’s proposal with fewer units that they clearly considered to be financially feasible. A copy of the Related California’s Response to the RFP proposal is attached to this letter as exhibit 3.

The WPA submitted a Scoping Letter on November 12, 2018, which is attached hereto as Exhibit 4. That Scoping Letter fully discussed the financial feasibility of a reduced density project. As WPA stated in that letter, the Related California proposal was for 680 units but in addition, Related California disclosed to WPA that a project with fewer units than 680 was feasible. Footnote 1 of the Scoping Letter, states that “In discussion with the Westwood Park Community, Related California acknowledged that a 500 unit development is financially feasible”. Hence, the statements in the DSEIR that the “financial feasibility of the reduced density alternative is unknown” are simply incorrect, contrary to the evidence, and ignores the factual evidence that is readily available to the Planning Department.

Alternative B: Reduced Density Alternative Mitigates Construction Impacts on Riordan High School and the Childcare Center

A noise monitoring report was prepared to establish the existing noise levels within 900 feet of the project site as part of the DSEIR. This report included a long term (24 hr. or longer) and a short term (15 min.) study. The closest Noise-Sensitive Receptor is Archbishop Riordan High School ("Riordan High School") which is within 80' of the North Access Road which is the route to be used by construction haul trucks for 4 months, and approximately 50' from the standard construction activities for the Lee Avenue extension and the Block G building. The estimated duration of construction noise from the project is six years.

Table 3.C-7 provides a list of equipment that generates noise between 74 (Welder, Concrete Truck) and 90 dBA (Hoe Ram, Concrete Saw, Rock/concrete Crusher) at a distance of 50' and at 110' the noise is reduced to 68 dBA (a welder) to 84 dBA (Hoe ram, Concrete Saw, Rock/Concrete Crusher). After Phase 1 is complete, in addition to the construction noise there will be an increase in noise from project related traffic. The noise impact on the Riordan High School as well as other nearby sensitive receptors such as the Ingleside Library and the Shining Stars Family Childcare Center will be significant.

The project included multiple buildings and is proposed to be constructed in two phases. Therefore, construction haul trucks will use the North Access Road not just during the estimated 4 months of the excavation and grading phase of the Project but for the full six years of the proposed construction. Although the DSEIR describes the construction noise as intermittent, these noisy periods will be disruptive to students and teachers throughout the Riordan High School day. The most effective way to mitigate construction impacts is to decrease the density of the project so as to not prolong the construction schedule and require a noise buffer zone adjacent to Riordan High School. We request that the analysis of the lower density alternative be included as a variant. A noise buffer zone next to Riordan High School and the Childcare Center should also be included as a mitigation measure.

Alternative C: San Ramon Way Passenger Vehicle Alternative

It is WPA's opinion that Alternative C, the San Ramon Way Passenger Vehicle Alternative should be rejected as an alternative by the Planning Department. As described in the DSEIR, San Ramon Way currently terminates just west of the Project site and that the WPA owns the 10-foot

wide parcel that separates the end of the street and the Project site. Implementation of this alternative would require purchase of this parcel by the Developer or the City.

Allowing San Ramon Way to be used for vehicle access would create significant adverse consequences. Attached to this letter as exhibit 5 is the declaration of Jenny Perez, a resident who has lived on lower Plymouth Avenue near San Ramon Way for 37 years. Ms. Perez submitted a declaration commenting on the inaccuracies in the DSEIR relating to the alternative use of San Ramon Way for vehicle traffic and to the additional adverse consequences if San Ramon is opened to through vehicle traffic.

Also attached as exhibit 6 is the declaration of Anne Chen, a resident of lower Plymouth for 40 years. Ms. Chen's declaration comments on the inaccuracies in the DSEIR relating to the alternative of using San Ramon Way for Vehicle traffic. WPA could have solicited many more similar declarations from WPA residences, and is willing to do so if that would be helpful.

The residents residing in WPA believes that this alternative, if implemented, would have a negative traffic and noise impact on the Westwood Park neighborhood, especially on Plymouth Avenue and San Ramon Way. WPA objects to this alternative and will not sell the WPA owned parcel to allow access to the project site. Thus, this alternative is not reasonably feasible and should have been rejected by the Department as an Alternative.

Alternative D: Six Year Construction Alternative

Alternative D is the "Six-Year Construction Alternative". This Alternative does not meet the criteria of an alternative as it is clearly nothing more than a variant of the proposed Project with a two phase construction schedule. The discussion of Alternative D in the DSEIR does not provide any additional information or analysis of potential impacts that are not already provided in the impact analysis of the Project. A potential six year construction schedule is noted as realistic and possible in the Project description, which can be imposed as a condition of approval by the Planning Commission. For Alternative D to be a true alternative, it must also include a comparison the impacts of Alternative B that would be constructed in two phases over a six year period. This is necessary so that there will be an objective basis for determining which project variant or alternative will have the least impact on the environment. Thus, the analysis in Alternative D does not provide any meaningful comparison of potential impacts or the "comparative merits of the

alternatives”, as required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(a). If the DSEIR is to include a two phase project as an alternative, then it should also include a two phase Alternative B in the Alternative D discussion.

Environmentally Superior Alternative

The DSEIR concludes that Alternative D is the “Environmentally Superior Alternative.” (DSEIR, pp. 6-49 – 6-50.) This conclusion contradicts the evidence provided in the DSEIR which states that the combination of the reduced density alternative (Alternative B) and Alternative D “**would result in less environmental impacts than the Project options and variants.**” (DSEIR, p. 6-50.) Therefore, it is clear that the combination of alternatives B and D would result in fewer environmental impacts. The inescapable conclusion would be that the environmentally superior alternative is Alternative B constructed over six years in two phases. As written, the alternative section of the DSEIR is drafted to lead, or mislead, the public and decision-makers into approving the Project or the Additional Housing Option that has a higher density even though neither the Project or the Additional Housing Option is the environmentally superior alternative.

Additional Housing (1,550) Unit Project Option

A representative of the developer has informed the Chair of the BRCAC that the developer will not develop the 1,550 unit Additional Housing Option. The Planning Department should verify the accuracy of this representation to the BRCAC. If correct, the 1,550 Unit Project option should be added to the list of alternatives considered but rejected by the Planning Department since its development will not be undertaken by the developer.

Rejection of the Alternative to use Project Site for CCSF

Parties of interest in the Scoping Process submitted requests for Alternatives to be considered in the DSEIR. Various parties requested that one Alternative that the City should include in the DSEIR is the use of the Project Site solely for CCSF [DSEIR, page 6-60]. The Planning Department rejected this alternative on the basis that the significant impacts cannot be eliminated and that the Project Sponsor’s objectives would not be implemented [DSEIR, page 6-60]. CCSF is a tuition free higher educational institution serving the educational needs of the residents of San Francisco, many of whom are immigrants. Since implementation of the free tuition policy, the student body of CCSF is estimated to increase by 55% by 2026. The new buildings in the CCSF Master Plan would occupy the current parking lot, which is the only

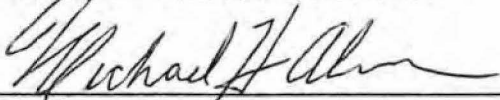
undeveloped portion of the CCSF Ocean Campus leaving this campus no additional room to expand. Public land should be used for public use and not private residential use. In this case, educational buildings and housing for CCSF students, staff, and teachers (both CCSF teachers and those in nearby public schools) should have been included and analyzed as an alternative use of the Project site.

3. Conclusion

The WPA looks forward to reviewing your responses to our comments. Please feel free to email the WPA at the email address: board@westwoodpark.com if you require additional information. We thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

WESTWOOD PARK ASSOCIATION

BY 
Michael Ahrens, President

cc: Anita Theoharis, Director of WPA
Anne Chen, Director of WPA
Joe Koman, Director of WPA
Francine Lofrano, Director of WPA
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Norman Yee, Supervisor, District 7
Jen Low, Legislative Aide to Supervisor Norman Yee
Ivy Lee, Legislative Aide to Supervisor Norman Yee

Encls: Exhibit 1 – Kittelson Study
Exhibit 2 – Photo of East & West Basin Parking Lots
Exhibit 3 – Related California Proposal
Exhibit 4 – Comments on Scope of Balboa Reservoir EIR
Exhibit 5 – Jenny Perez Declaration
Exhibit 6 – Anne Chen Declaration